

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINAL REPORT

March 1, 2002

By

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Ergonomics

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II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Criteria

In his letter of May 25, 2000, establishing the Blue Ribbon Panel on Ergonomics, Governor Gary Locke instructed Gary Moore, director of the Department of Labor and Industries, as follows:

“Before L&I enforces this rule, I want to be able to provide assurance to our state’s employers that the agency has fulfilled its obligations. For that reason, I am directing you to establish an independent blue ribbon panel to assess whether the following criteria have been met.

- **Demonstration projects have been successful;**
- **Effective education materials are widely available;**
- **The requirements are understandable; and**
- **The enforcement policies and procedures are fair and consistent.”**

Conclusions

The Panel held four public meetings, sponsored a public hearing, gathered and reviewed a substantial amount of information from the department and from the public over the course of the past year. After careful deliberation, we have arrived at the following conclusions:

Demonstration Projects. The objective of the demonstration projects was to provide concrete examples by and for employers on how to comply with the rule and to test in the demonstration process whether the rule was understandable. The Panel concludes that the demonstration projects have met this objective. The projects have shown that the rule is understandable and the various guides, documents, checklists and other materials produced during the demonstrations will be helpful in the practical management of the rule.

Education materials. The purpose of the assessment of the educational programs was to determine if effective educational materials are widely available. The Panel has concluded that effective educational materials are widely available.

Understandability. The Panel was asked to determine whether the requirements of the rule are understandable. The Panel believes the rule itself is clearly written, and together with the educational materials, enforcement policies and procedures, is understandable.

Enforcement Policies and Procedures. The Panel was asked to determine whether the enforcement policies and procedures are fair and consistent. While it is difficult to assess the fairness of a process prior to its implementation, the Panel believes the process described by the rule, its implementing WISHA Regional Directive (WRD) and the WISHA enforcement procedures provide a foundation for fair and consistent enforcement.

Recommendations

While the panel believes the criteria the governor established have been met, we offer the following recommendations to facilitate effective and fair implementation of the ergonomics rule.

Recommendation 1. As WISHA proceeds to the subsequent stages in the implementation of the ergonomics rule, the demonstration project approach should continue to be used to assist the agency in further promoting understanding of the rule. The agency should develop a specific plan for the next phase of demonstration projects, which should be run in as many industries as is reasonable, with emphasis on industries where significant hazard reductions can be anticipated. The panel strongly encourages all employers and employees to participate in these demonstration projects when offered the opportunity.

Recommendation 2. Further development of educational programs should continue and, in particular, should include additional training on alternative hazard analysis tools. Special attention should be given to the educational and training needs of small businesses.

Recommendation 3. The Department should explore innovative programs to further promote their consultation services to employers. Adequate resources should be provided to these and other outreach programs.

Recommendation 4. As an additional aid to consistency, during the first two years of enforcement of the ergonomics regulation, the Department should clear all citations, prior to issuance, through its office of the Ergonomics Program Director.

Recommendation 5. The Department should, on a regular basis, report on the progress of current and future demonstration projects, educational programs, consultation programs and enforcement activities to the WISHA Advisory Committee.